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Rice warm to CIA cop-hiring idea

By Michael Cordis
and Jim Casey

Police Supt. Fred Rice yesterday said he "certainly" would cooperate with the CIA if it tries to recruit Chicago police officers to beef up the agency's anti-terrorist forces overseas.

At a terrorism seminar last July at CIA headquarters in Virginia, the agency initially discussed recruiting police detectives to become temporary federal agents. Rice and 17 other big-city police chiefs attended.

Rice said CIA Director William J. Casey asked the 18 departments to assist the agency in recruiting retired officers or those on active

duty for three-year stints overseas.

"Rather than working with green recruits, they'd rather have trained police officers," Rice said.

But Rice said he thought the CIA would contact him later. It still has not.

More than 200 New York police detectives have expressed an interest in joining the CIA. Nearly 70 took a written 8-hour test this month, a department spokesman said.

New York police who accept CIA assignments would have to seek leaves of absence, retire or resign.

Other police agencies have not been as receptive to the CIA. Los Angeles police refused to discuss published reports that the depart-

ment would not assist the CIA.

A CIA spokesman, Kathy Pherson, refused to discuss how many police officers the agency wanted, where they would be deployed, or why the agency was turning to local police for help.

She did say the recruitment of police was "not terribly organized at this time."

She added, "We need all the help we can get to ensure the safety of Americans abroad."

Asked if Rice would be contacted, Pherson refused to discuss specific police departments.

But she added, "If he is positive and might have some good candidates, the agency would be interested."